

NOTES ON BREEDING THE SCARLET ROBIN (PETROICA MULTICOLOR)

By ALWYN Y. PEPPER, Searborough, W.A.

On April 10th, 1962, an adult male was placed in my large heavily planted aviary (36' x 30' x 10') with a mixed collection of finches, Yellow-tailed Thornbills and wrens. On 4th June, 1962, an adult female was also introduced to the aviary. Two days later the male commenced to sing for the first time in captivity. Both birds remained aloof from each other.

June 12, 1962. The male was observed alone on a low branch whilst the female was 20 feet distant on another perch. Suddenly the female flew very slowly past the male, fluttering like a butterfly, and in doing so gently brushed her wings over his head and continued on. The male remained perfectly still until she had passed then fully extended each wing in turn, so that the wing covered his side and hid his legs but displayed the white wing patch to advantage. In July the male moulted.

August 2, 1962. Lichens, paper bark and spider webs were placed in the aviary.

October 15, 1962. Both birds were placed in a small enclosure in order to photograph them. The female was willing to stand on the same perch as male but the male would not approach perch whilst it was occupied by female.

Their song was a delightful low sweet "Diddle-lee" repeated twice during the day. Both birds flew at night and sang "Diddle-lee" and repeated once only. In the stillness of a warm moonlight night their song sounded exuberatingly sweet.

Both birds commenced a heavy moult in the last week of November 1962 which was completed by the first week of January 1963. The male suffered a considerable loss of red colouring which was never regained.

January 28, 1963. Male was observed chasing and snapping at female. Both birds were heard calling a quiet chattering warble whilst perching. A harsh note could be heard in flight as male chased female or if the male attempted to alight near her. Birds would not perch together but would perch on separate prongs of a forked stick.

July 17, 1963. Both robins were in very fit condition and male was observed feeding the female for the first time. Female fluttered her wings whilst accepting the insect.

July 29, 1963. Female flew around aviary carrying paper-bark in her bill.

August 7, 1963. The male was observed standing on a few pieces of dried grass that had been laid in a pencil pine tree and uttering a loud continuous squeaking rattle (nesting site call). By now the male was often seen to catch insects and fly to a branch. The female then flew and perched beside him to accept food.

August 31, 1963. Female only was busy carrying grass, bark and hemp to nesting site. The male encouraged her with the nesting site call. Both birds vigorously kept other species away and had evicted a nest each of Red-eared Firetail finches and Orange-breasted Waxbills that were in the same tree.

September 18, 1963. Female stayed in the nest for longer periods. Male did not feed the female in the nest but with a single note called to her from some distance away. She then left the nest with a squeaking call and flew to his perch. This behaviour occurred often during the day. Sometimes the sound of his bill snapping on a flying insect was enough to call her off the nest.

September 26, 1963. Male entered nest for the first time and appeared very excited. Both birds entered nest with food and gave two or three squeaks before entering. If the female was on the nest when the male approached she flew out. The male then entered and stayed about one minute before leaving.

October 6, 1963. The female was observed carrying more nesting material to the nesting site evidently for renovation purposes. On one occasion the male crammed his bill with sixteen large fat winged termites and carried them to the nest.

October 11, 1963. One baby Searlet Robin was observed sitting on a low rose bush just twelve inches off the ground and beneath the nesting tree. The youngster occupied this position all day and was fed by the male. The same day the male commenced calling the nesting site call from within another pencil pine tree. The female responded and investigated his choice. Yellow-tailed Thornbills also were attracted to the site but were chased off by both robins.

October 13, 1963. The male had somehow acquired a fractured leg which hung down in a useless manner. He continued to feed the baby.

October 19, 1963. The male was still feeding the baby and female was busy constructing a second nest at the site apparently selected by male. Nesting material from the first nest was also used.

The male had by now developed a heavy moult maybe caused by his injury.

October 21, 1963. Apart from courtship feeding no display by the male was noticed. On this day the female was observed standing on a branch and suddenly gave forth with a loud prolonged rattling note. The call was sustained until the male flew to her from the far side of the aviary and immediately mated with her despite the handicap of his useless leg and heavy moult. No mutual preening ever took place between parents or youngster.

October 22, 1963. Youngster was observed picking at insects on the ground.

November 10, 1963. A white spot above the bill commenced to appear on the youngster which was still being fed by male. The female continued to sit on the nest.

November 20, 1963. On this day the male flew very high and clung to the aviary netting with a large winged insect. He called repeatedly and excitedly until the female left the nest and joined him. She caught hold of one end of the insect and a tug-of-war occurred. After a short time she let go. He again presented the insect and another tug-of-war took place. Again she released her hold. The male finally presented the insect and she swallowed it.

November 22, 1963. The male bird was found dead, whereupon the female deserted her nest containing one egg and commenced the task of feeding her baby of the first nest.

December 25, 1963. The baby was rapidly moulting into adult female plumage but was still being fed by her mother and in fact was fed right up to January 3, 1964. By the end of January the youngster had attained adult plumage but was not as bright as her mother.

The nests constructed by the female Scarlet Robin were quite unlike the typical nest of this species. Cup shaped and *very roughly* built of dried grass, paper bark, hemp and a little spiders' web. No lichen was used. She certainly adapted herself to alien surroundings.

Live termites (white ants) were always on hand. Cheese crumbs and a mixture composed of beef dripping, poultry laying mash, wheat germ, Casinal and honey was supplied each day. Three small electric light globes attracted insects each night.

Much of the success was due to my wife's unending toil in keeping up the supply of insects as food.

A NEW SPECIES OF BANKSIA FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By C. A. GARDNER

Banksia Lullfitzii C. A. Gardn. sp. nov.

Frutex erectus, densus, 1.6 m. attingens, ramis validis; ramulis erectis, subflexuosis, cinereo-tomentosis. *Folia* erecta, rigida, plusminusve tortuosa, elongato-linearia, longe petiolata, usque 40 cm. longa, dentato-ineisa, dentibus late et oblique deltoideis, remotis, 3-5 mm. long., pungentibus, decurrentibus omnium distantibus, enervis (costa media excepta), supra glabra enervia, subtus reticulatis, alte lacunosis, lacunis albo-lanatis, demum glabratis, rhachi anguste marginantibus.

Spicae terminantibus vel lateralibus, cylindricis, usque 15 cm. longis et 9 cm. diam., foliae paucae obvallatae; bractea rufo-villosae, apice triangularibus. *Perianthium* aurantiacum, 3-3.2 cm. long., dense tomentosum, limbum acutum, 5-6 mm. long.; stylus rigidus, arcuato-curvatus, perianthium paule excedens, glaber; squamae hypogynae nullae; ovarium parvum, apice dense pilosum; stigma leviter striata.

Follicula compressa, obliqua, superne obovata-orbicularia, 2 cm. long. et 13 mm. lata, breviter tomentosa, demum glabra; semina